WASHINGTON DC – Today, Rep Michael Honda joins Santa Clara University (SCU) in celebrating the success of, and exhibiting projects designed for, the Robotic Exploration Technologies in Astrobiology (RETINA) program, for which Rep Honda secured $382,000 in FY 2008 and FY 2009 funding. At 230 p.m. today, Tuesday, February 16, 2010, at Santa Clara University, Rep Honda will host SCU graduate and undergraduate students, and over 70 girl scouts who are being trained by SCU students, in an exhibition of the projects designed and engineered through the RETINA program.

Working with NASA's aim to directly support the development of workforce skills for the next generation of scientists and engineers, RETINA puts SCU undergraduate and graduate students in direct collaboration with NASA scientists. Nearly 100 SCU students have completed the course on Satellite Operations, which puts students in control of real research-related satellites operating in space. One major accomplishment of RETINA in 2009 involved SCU students engineering two satellite payloads and monitoring the flight and operations of these satellites.

Other RETINA accomplishments in 2009 include SCU students mapping a portion of Lake Tahoe using a multi-beam sonar, augmenting USGS efforts and developing new curricula for K-8 education that meet CA educational standards, promote environmental sustainability, and will be distributed widely, and without cost, via the internet to any interested school in CA. In 2010 SCU students, using the science and technology learned in the RETINA program, plans to map the entirety of San Francisco Bay, providing the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration with the data.

"RETINA's experiential education and hands-on job training methodologies is absolutely critical to ensuring the health of the country's aerospace industry and maintaining the United States' leadership in science and technology as well as its economic competitiveness," said Rep Honda. "Consistent with my legislative efforts to improve Science, Technology, Engineering and Math education (H.R. 2710 eSTEM Act), Santa Clara University and NASA are operating one of the most unique educational experiences in the country and are truly developing a science and technology workforce for the next generation. As a member of the House Appropriations Committee and as a former educator, I have full faith in RETINA's innovative approach and am thrilled, as a Member of Congress, to be able to support these young scientists."

Directions to the event: At SCU's El Camino Real/Palm Drive Main entrance, make a left into the Parking Structure and head west towards the Engineering Department buildings. The event will be held in the central courtyard.